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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Review of publications by the Department of Public Information

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 51/138 B of 13 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session.

2. The present report is submitted to the Committee on Information pursuant to those requests of the General Assembly. In accordance with the resolution, the report covers both recurrent and non-recurrent publications produced and distributed by the Department of Public Information. A list of recurrent publications issued during 1996 is contained in annex I, and a list of non-recurrent publications appears in annex II.

3. The Department of Public Information continued during 1996 to implement the publications strategy detailed in its report to the Committee at its eighteenth session (A/AC.198/1996/3). The goal of this strategy is, through rigorous review of the rationale and effectiveness of the Department's outputs, to make all its publications more widely available, more cost-effective, more timely and also more marketable. With the enhanced access to sales market for United Nations publications made possible by the incorporation of the Sales and Marketing Section into the Department, publications are being revitalized through the adoption of more demand-driven approaches in style and content. At the same time, the Department is taking rapid advantage of the vast potential

presented by electronic publishing, particularly the Internet, to further broaden its outreach.

II. GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

4. The Department's publications are designed to provide authoritative information on the goals and activities of the Organization and to reflect the vital role it plays in meeting contemporary challenges. To realize that goal, the Department's publications are now being more sharply focused to show how the work of the United Nations system is relevant to the lives of people in every part of the world. The Department is thus working closely with substantive departments, programmes and agencies to help sharpen and give greater authority to each publication's message and content, including information about the reform programme now under way. An important aspect of this approach is correcting the many misperceptions and misunderstandings of the role and work of the United Nations. To help address that problem, the Department has published a revised edition of Image & Reality in a format that permits easy updating and reprinting. Like many of the Department's products, it has been adapted for publication on the United Nations home page on the World Wide Web.

5. Authoritative publications continue to have a long-term impact on opinion and policy. Our principal target groups as such are the media, the academic community, non-governmental organizations and other public and official institutions. United Nations information centres, with their immediate access to such audiences in the regions they serve, remain a principal means of accessing those target groups. In addition, customized mailing lists are used for a number of products, such as the quarterly magazine Africa Recovery and the bimonthly newsletter Development Update, to enable those news-driven publications to rapidly reach important sections of their target audience. The development of the United Nations web site is of course further enhancing this outreach effort.

6. Other ways of broadening the outreach of the Department's print publications are co-publishing ventures with United Nations information centres and/or commercial publishing houses. Such publications, mostly in non-official languages, have enabled the Department to reach a wider group of people at a minimal cost to the Organization. In 1996, for example, a Russian edition of Basic Facts about the United Nations was produced, and other language versions are in preparation. United Nations information centres were instrumental in the publication of shorter versions of titles in the Blue Books Series, which are targeted at a wider audience than the academic and research communities at which the Series was principally aimed. Popular versions of The United Nations and Cambodia, 1991-1995 and The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994 were produced in Russian (the latter was also produced in English), and a Japanese version of The United Nations and Human Rights, 1948-1995 was also produced in 1996.

III. ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

7. With the ever-increasing use of non-traditional media, an area of publishing has developed that offers more than an additional format for printed material. Electronic publishing allows for the creation of products specifically designed to take advantage of the unique features of the media.

8. As we continue to serve the demand for traditional print products, the development of the United Nations web site is providing the Department with the means to reach directly a vast new audience. The United Nations home page is the most visible addition to the Department's publication responsibilities.

9. Another is the United Nations CyberSchoolBus, an award-winning on-line educational service. In a visually stimulating and content-rich environment, the United Nations CyberSchoolBus offers real-time projects, weekly quizzes and resources for teachers and students of all grades and all fields of study. It offers information about the United Nations, its activities and important global concerns, a database of facts on each of the 185 Member States and much more, all done in a highly interactive environment. Although it appears in a new medium, the United Nations CyberSchoolBus is classified as a United Nations publication, adapting the successful series of school kits on the United Nations originally published for the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization.

10. Also available on-line are procurement notices from Development Business. Called Scan-a-Bid, this service is produced with a commercial company that provides access to development projects. The United Nations accrues income based on usage.

11. Taking the experience gained by the production of the United Nations CyberSchoolBus, the Department will continue to explore areas in which the new electronic format can broaden access to information or facilitate its use.

12. Existing materials, such as Information for Delegations and Image & Reality, are now available on the Internet. Publications normally distributed free of charge, such as Africa Recovery, UN Briefing Papers and United Nations in Brief, are also being put on the Internet.

IV. USE OF NEW PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES

13. The Department's increasing use of new technologies in the area of production is also enabling it to enhance productivity and ensure more timely delivery of products. Investment in desktop publishing capacity for the Yearbook of the United Nations, the most comprehensive and authoritative reference book on all aspects of the work of the Organization and its common system, for example, is expected to shorten the production time, thus making new volumes available sooner.

14. The Department's use of new technologies played an important role in its success in publicizing the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, in which production of an attractive information kit was linked to a multimedia, satellite-linked launch of the Initiative, leading to excellent

coverage throughout the world. An extensive training programme has been undertaken for the Department's staff to enhance their ability to utilize fully developments in information technologies.

V. INTERNAL PRINTING

15. As was the case for an increasing number of the Department's publications in 1996, The Blue Helmets was printed internally, thereby helping to keep costs down. In 1996, all of the 11 volumes published in the Blue Books Series were printed internally. The combined use of desktop publishing and internal printing, with the improved productivity and lower costs that result, is enabling the Department to improve the timeliness of its publications, with more frequent updating of basic products such as United Nations in Brief and Image & Reality. Improvements in internal typesetting are also helping to facilitate publication in all six official languages of basic information materials on the United Nations. The short, easy-to-read guide to the United Nations, United Nations in Brief, which is aimed at general audiences, is produced in all six languages at little cost and is updated as demand for copies requires.

VI. PUBLICATIONS BOARD INITIATIVES

16. Under the chairmanship of the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, the Publications Board, assisted by its Working Committee, continued its work to strengthen coordination within the Secretariat on a range of publication activities and policies. Assistance from the revitalized Vienna Working Group, as well as the appointment of a new Chairman of the Vienna Working Group, have contributed to the Board's work.

17. The acceleration of electronic publishing in the United Nations led to the Board's increased focus during 1996 in that area. The Working Committee began updating the ST/AI/189 series of administrative instructions on regulations for the control and limitation of documentation to take into account developments in electronic publishing. In that connection, a revised instruction on newsletters, which also encompasses information disseminated electronically on home pages, was drafted. A new instruction on guidelines for publishing in an electronic format was produced by the Board and issued in 1996.

VII. ENHANCING SALES

18. With the close involvement of the Sales and Marketing Section, the Department has been able to realize its goal of enhancing sales publications. For example, the Blue Books Series provides primary United Nations research and reference materials, along with an extensive introduction on important issues in international affairs in which the Organization has been centrally involved, for use by scholars, policy makers, journalists and others. It has proved to be a successful sales item, with 1996 sales increasing 40 per cent over those in 1995.

19. Notes for Speakers, which is primarily geared to audiences active in outreach efforts on behalf of the United Nations, has been given a new design and has been renamed UN Briefing Papers. This will enhance its appeal to university students, who have been identified as a potential sales audience for this publication. The latest edition of the authoritative publication on peacekeeping, The Blue Helmets, has also been completely redesigned, and its print run has been increased significantly.

20. The Department's increased focus on the marketing and sale of its products is also reflected in changes to its magazine, UN Chronicle, which provides a unique and concise overview of all major United Nations activities in a journalistic style. The relevance and marketability of the magazine has already been enhanced with an improved design and more interviews with and essays on issues of immediate public concern prepared by senior United Nations officials and other international figures.

21. The biennial Basic Facts about the United Nations, already one of the best-selling United Nations publications, is also being completely rethought and designed to make the large amount of information it contains easily accessible to the reader.

22. Such actions are ensuring that all publications are carefully differentiated and positioned with regard to audience and markets. To assist in that task, a survey on recurrent publications is being prepared for distribution through United Nations information centres, the Sales and Marketing Section and other disseminators of the Department's publications, such as non-governmental organizations.

VIII. ACCESS TO UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION

23. In order to facilitate and enhance access to United Nations information, in 1996 the Dag Hammarskjöld Library published the Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The Library also published UNDOC: Current Index. Those publications are the basic tools needed to search for United Nations information.

24. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also launched its own home page on the Internet, on which it has published an ongoing series of subject-focused bibliographies in areas such as reform of the United Nations, the Security Council, the Charter of the United Nations, peacekeeping operations and the Secretary-General. The Library has also posted on its site a database providing access to document symbols for the most frequently requested United Nations information, known as UN-I-QUE (UN Info Quest).

Annex I

RECURRENT MATERIAL PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN 1996

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
		Institutional publications				
1	1723	Confronting New Challenges: Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, 1995 (Sales No. 95.I.47)	Book	Arabic Chinese Russian	3 500 1 500 2 000	January January January
2	1821	The Fiftieth Anniversary Annual Report on the Work of the Organization (Sales No. 96.I.19)	Book	Arabic Chinese English French Russian Spanish	3 000 1 500 10 000 4 500 2 000 3 300	November October October October November October
3	Vol. 48	Yearbook of the United Nations (1994) (Sales No. 95.I.1)	Book	English	6 000	June
4	Vol. XXXIII	UN Chronicle	Quarterly			
		No. 1, 1996		English	12 500	March
		No. 1, 1996		French	5 000	December
		No. 2, 1996		English	12 500	June
5	1580	Basic Facts about the United Nations (Sales No. 95.I.31)	Book	French Spanish Russian (UNIC Moscow)	10 000 7 500 5 000	April April June
6	1223/Rev.3	United Nations in Brief	Pamphlet	English Spanish	7 000 3 000	October October
7	1838	Image & Reality (Sales No. 96.I.31)	Booklet	English	10 000	December
8	Vol. 10	Africa Recovery	Quarterly	English	23 500	May/October/December
		No. 1, May 1996		French	8 500	May
		No. 2, October 1996			8 000	October
		No. 3, December 1996			8 200	December
9	1452	Development Update	Newsletter	English	20 000	
		No. 13, January-February 1996				February
		No. 14, March-April 1996				May
		No. 15, May-June 1996				June
		No. 16, July-August 1996				August
		No. 17, September-October 1996				October
10	Nos. 430-453	Development Business	twice-monthly newspaper	English	6 000	January-December

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
		Thematic publications				
A.	**Blue Books Series**					
1	1676	The United Nations and Human Rights, 1945-1995, Vol. VII (Sales No. 95.I.21)	Book	Spanish	2 500	February
2	1677	The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996, Vol. VIII (Sales No. 96.I.8)	Book	Arabic	750	October
				English	6 000	January
				French	2 000	June
3	1678	The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993-1996, Vol. X (Sales No. 96.I.20)	Book	English	5 000	June
4	1770	The United Nations and the Iraq-Kuwait Conflict, 1990-1996, Vol. IX (Sales No. 96.I.3)	Book	Arabic	2 300	June
				English	6 000	February
				French	1 500	August
5	1804	The United Nations and the Advancement of Women, 1945-1996 (revised edition), Vol. VI (Sales No. 96.I.9)	Book	English	5 000	April
6	1839	The United Nations and Haiti, 1990-1996, Vol. XI (Sales No. 96.I.11)	Book	French	3 000	November
7	1850	The United Nations and the Independence of Eritrea, Vol. XII (Sales No. 96.I.10)	Book	English	3 500	December
B.	**Mini-Blue Books Series**					
1		The United Nations and Cambodia, 1991-1995 (UNIC Moscow)	Book	Russian	1 000	May
2		The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994 (UNIC Moscow)	Book	Russian	1 000	May
3	1810	The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994 (Sales No. 96.I.18)	Book	English	1 000	April
		Reference publications				
1	ST/LIB/SER.M/117	UNDOC: Current Index, January 1996 (Parts I and II)	Serial	English	1 840	February
2	ST/LIB/SER.M/118	UNDOC: Current Index, April 1996 (Parts I and II)	Serial	English	1 930	June
3	ST/LIB/SER.M/119	UNDOC: Current Index, September 1996 (Parts I and II)	Serial	English	1 930	October
4	ST/LIB/SER.B/A.51	Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly, forty-ninth session	Serial	Chinese	110	April

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
5	ST/LIB/SER.B/A.52	Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly, fiftieth session (Parts I and II)	Serial	English	1 635	December
6	ST/LIB/SER.B/S.32	Index to Proceedings of the Security Council, fiftieth year (1995)	Serial	Chinese	110	August
				English	1 690	April
7	ST/LIB/SER.B/E.72	Index to Proceedings of the Economic and Social Council, 1995	Serial	English	1 680	June
8	Reference Paper No. 35	United Nations Conferences and Observances	Reference paper	English	12 560	February
				French	1 360	February
				Spanish	1 050	February

Annex II

NON-RECURRENT MATERIAL PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN 1996

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
		Institutional publications				
1	1384	What's the United Nations?	Booklet	English	10 000	May
2	1598/Rev.1	About the United Nations: Information Guide for the Public	Booklet	English	10 000	September
3	1744	Understanding the United Nations: The Official Guidebook	Book	English	350	December
4	1753/Rev.2	Setting the Record Straight: Some Facts about the United Nations	Fact sheet	English	1 000	February
	Rev.3			English	5 000	March
	Rev.4			English	5 000	April
	Rev.5			English	5 000	May
	Rev.6			English	5 000	July
	Rev.7			English	5 000	August
	Rev.8			English	5 000	September
	Rev.9			English	5 000	October
	Rev.10			French	2 000	October
				English	5 000	November
				French	2 000	November
				Spanish	2 000	November
5	1759	The United Nations at Fifty: Statements by the Secretary-General at the United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Session, 22-24 October 1995	Pamphlet	Arabic	75	February
				Chinese	50	February
				English	400	February
				French	200	February
				Russian	75	February
				Spanish	150	February
6	1761	Office of Internal Oversight Services	Booklet	English	5 000	February
7	1794	1997 United Nations Calendar (Sales No. 96.I.17)	Calendar	English	5 000	June
8	1806	Come to the United Nations, It's Your World!	Brochure	English	250,000	June
9	1815/Rev.1	United Nations Financial Crisis at a Glance	Fact sheet	English	5 000	May
	Rev.2			English	5 000	May
	Rev.3			English	5 000	May
	Rev.4			English	5 000	August
	Rev.5			English	5 000	September
	Rev.6			English	5 000	October
	Rev.7			French	2 000	October
				English	5 000	November
				French	2 000	November
				Spanish	2 000	November

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
10	1817 Rev.1	DPI: Achieving Still More with Less DPI: New Challenges, New Efficiencies	Fact sheet	English English	5 000 5 000	May November
11	1820 Rev.1	Why Business Should Support the UN The United Nations and business: A Global Partnership	Backgrounder	English English	5 000 5 000	May July
12	1825 Rev.1 Rev.2	United Nations Conferences: What Do They Accomplish?	Fact sheet	English English English French Spanish	5 000 5 000 2 000 2 000 2 000	May July August October November
13	1835	Fifty-first Session of the General Assembly	Press kit	English French	3 000 2 000	August August
14	1841/PIU	Three Ways to Help the United Nations	Brochure	English	10 000	September
15	1844	September 1996 Mid-term Review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s: Report of the Secretary-General	Press kit with 4 enclosures	English French	6 000 2 000	September September
16	1847	The United Nations: Telling the Story Selected Media Coverage	Pamphlet	English	7 000	September
17	1848 Rev.1	Setting the Record Straight	Compilation	English English French Spanish	7 000 8 000 3 000 3 000	September November November November
18	1857	The United Nations System	Chart	English/ French	10 000	October
19	1867	An Agenda for Democratization (Sales No. 97.1.3)	Booklet	English	5 000	December
		Reference publications				
1	ST/LIB/34/Rev.2	United Nations Documentation: A Brief Guide	Brochure	English	2 000	January
2	ST/LIB/40/Rev.1	UNBIS Thesaurus	Book	French Spanish	775 525	January January
3	ST/LIB/41/Rev.1	United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library	Brochure	English	5 000	July
4	1755	UN in Action Catalogue	Booklet	English	500	May

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
		Publications on thematic issues				
A.	**Peace and security**					
1	1634/PKO/Rev.2	United Nations Peacekeeping Operations	Backgrounder	English	2 000	March
	Rev.3			English	5 000	March
				French	2 000	March
				Spanish	2 000	March
	Rev.4			English	5 000	August
				French	2 000	August
				Spanish	2 000	August
	Rev.5			English	5 000	December
				French	2 000	December
				Spanish	2 000	December
2	1800/PKO	The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces (Sales No. 96.I.14)	Book	English	5 000	December
				(Sales)	10 000	
3	1823	United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES)	Information package	English	2 500	May
				French	1 500	September
4	1827	United Nations Peacekeeping	Book	English	20 000	August
				French	5 000	December
5	1845	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Information package	English	5 000	August
6	1851 Rev.1	United Nations Peacekeeping: Some Questions and Answers	Fact sheet	English	5 000	September
				English	5 000	November
				French	2 000	November
				Spanish	2 000	November
7	1852	United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH)	Fact sheet	English	2 000	June
				French	2 000	July
8	1853	The United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH)	Backgrounder	English	2 000	June
				French	2 000	July
9	1860	United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan	Information note	English	2 000	October
10	1861	Year in Review 1996: UN Peace Missions	Pamphlet	English	4 000	December
B.	**Advancement of women**					
1	99?/WOM/Rev.1	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Booklet	English	30 000	August
				French	5 000	September
				Spanish	5 000	September

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity	Month of release
2	1762/WOM	Fourth World Conference on Women: Platform for Action Summary	Leaflet	French 10 000 Spanish 10 000 English 30 000 (reprint)	March March June
3	1766/WOM	Fourth World Conference on Women: Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration (Reprint of document A/CONF.177/20)	Book	English 30 000 Arabic Chinese French Russian Spanish 5 000 each	March January
4	1773/WOM	CEDAW to hold its 15th session in New York, 15 January-2 February 1996	Backgrounder	English 2 000	January
5	1785/WOM	Women in the United Nations: approaching critical mass	Backgrounder	English 2 000	March
6	1796/WOM Rev.1	UN Action for Women	Fact Sheet	English 2 000 English 20 000 French 5 000 Spanish 5 000	February May June June
7	1797/WOM	8 March: International Women's Day	Backgrounder	English 2 000	February
8	1809/WOM	Focus on Women: After the Beijing Conference, Movement for Equality Is Still Alive	Fact sheet	English 2 000	April
9	1862	Women at a Glance	Fact sheet	English 1 000 (photocopied)	December
C.	Economic and social development				
1	1143/CRM/Rev.2	The United Nations and Crime Prevention: Seeking Security and Justice for All (Sales No. 96.IV.9)	Book	English 5 000	June
2	1707	World Summit for Social Development: The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action	Book	French 10 000	March
3	1711	Report of the 48th Annual DPI/NGO Conference: The United Nations at the Turn of the Century: Global Issues, Global Actors, Global Responsibility	Booklet	English 3 000	June
4	1747/HAB/CON	Habitat II - The City Summit	Poster	Arabic 8 000 Chinese 4 000 English 50 000 French 15 000 Russian 8 000 Spanish 15 000	January January January January January January

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity	Month of release
5	1760	Habitat II - The City Summit	Information kit with 8 backgrounders and a biography (also distributed individually)	English 20 000 French 7 500 Spanish 7 500	January January January
6	1776/CRM	The United Nations and Crime Prevention: Seeking Security and Justice for All	Brochure	English 5 000	June
7	1780	Keys to Longevity	Backgrounder	English only 10 000 (photocopied)	April
8	1799	United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa	Press kit with 6 enclosures	English 7 000 French 3 000	March March
9	1807/POV	International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, 1996	Information kit with 8 enclosures	English 10 000 French 2 000 Spanish 3 000	March April May, June
10	1818/HAB/CON	Habitat II Update	Backgrounder	English 20 000 French 8 000 Spanish 8 000	May May May
11	1822/HAB/CON	Habitat II: Information for Media	Information note	English 8 000 French 3 000 Spanish 3 000	May May May
12	1824	Habitat II: Some Facts about the City Summit	Fact sheet	English 1 000 (photocopied)	May
13	1829	Of Drought and Dust Bowls: Getting the Global Picture	Fact sheet	English 1 000	June
14	1842/POV	United Nations Action against Poverty	Backgrounder	English 20 000 French 4 000 Spanish 6 000	September October November
15	1846/HAB/CON	Habitat Agenda and Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements: Summary	Brochure	English 50 000	October
16	1858/AGE	The Ageing of the World's Population: Preparing for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999	Backgrounder	English 4 000	October
17	No. 10	Credit at the Grassroots (Africa Recovery insert)	Briefing paper	English 10 500 French 2 000	October October

	DPI No.	Title	Type	Language and quantity		Month of release
D.	Sustainable development					
1	1307	Convention on Biodiversity	Booklet	English	8 000	October
2	1745	Action '95: Commission on Sustainable Development	Booklet	English	5 000	January
				French	3 000	January
				Spanish	3 000	January
3	1814 Rev.1	The United Nations: Protecting the Global Environment	Fact sheet	English	1 000	March
				English	5 000	May
E.	Human rights					
1	1627/HR	The Challenge of Human Rights and Cultural Diversity	Backgrounder	Arabic	4 000	February
				Chinese	3 000	February
				Russian	4 000	February
2	1765/HR	Children's Rights	Backgrounder	English	20 000	January
				French	8 000	January
				Spanish	8 000	January
3	1772/HR	Women and Violence	Backgrounder	English	20 000	February
				French	8 000	February
				Spanish	8 000	February
4	1774/HR	The United Nations and Human Rights	Brochure	English	20 000	July
				French	8 000	July
				Spanish	8 000	July
5	1833	Impact of Armed Conflict on Children	Press kit with 8 backgrounders and 8 photos/graphics	English	8 000	October
6	1834	Impact of Armed Conflict on Children	Booklet	English	5 000	October
7	1837/HR	Independence of the Judiciary: A Human Rights Priority	Backgrounder	English	20 000	August
				French	8 000	August
				Spanish	8 000	August
F.	Public administration					
1	1777/PUB/ADM	Resumed Fiftieth General Assembly Session on Public Adminstration and Development	Brochure	English	14 000	February
				French	6 500	March
				Spanish	6 500	March
2	1793/PUB/ADM	Resumed Fiftieth General Assembly Session on Public Adminstration and Development	Press kit with 1 brochure and 5 backgrounders	English	5 000	April
				French	2 000	April
				Spanish	2 000	April

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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Review of publications produced by the Department of Public Information in the sphere of development

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted to the Committee on Information pursuant to resolution 51/138 B of 13 December 1996. In paragraph 8 of that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to review the publications produced by the Department of Public Information in the sphere of development.

2. In accordance with the above request, the emphasis of the present report is on Africa Recovery, Development Business and Development Update, the Department's main periodical publications dealing exclusively with development issues. In addition, the development-related contents of its two other regular publications, UN Chronicle and Notes for Speakers (now entitled UN Briefing Papers), are briefly reviewed.

II. AFRICA RECOVERY

3. Africa Recovery grew out of Africa Emergency, a quarterly publication of the former United Nations Office of Emergency Operations in Africa. When this office closed in late 1986, there was still strong support from both within and outside the United Nations system for its Africa publication, which had developed strong communication links with many of the continent's key supporters in the media, non-governmental, governmental and donor communities. Since the General Assembly, in a special session, had just adopted the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (General Assembly resolution S-13/2 of 1 June 1986) - the first ever and only General Assembly programme directed at one particular region - the Department decided

that it would develop a new publication oriented towards African economic development issues. Africa Recovery was first published in April 1987 with extrabudgetary support from the Department, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Steering Committee for the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. The decision to produce an Africa-oriented publication reflected the high priority attached to African development by the General Assembly, as well as by the Secretary-General.

4. Since its start in 1987, the focus of Africa Recovery has been on building international awareness of the continent's critical economic situation, the steps being taken by African countries themselves to alleviate the crisis and the support being given to these efforts by the international community and the United Nations system. The format has been refined over the years and now includes many more charts and tables that contain key information about the continent's economic development.

5. Africa Recovery has been funded under the Organization's regular budget since 1990 under subprogramme 3, The campaign for global awareness of the critical economic situation in Africa, of programme 45, Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as revised.[1] The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from several General Assembly resolutions, including resolution S-13/2 (adoption of the Programme of Action) and resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991 (adoption of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa).

6. Since 1990, the Department's Africa Recovery Section has had two Professional and two General Service regular budget posts: an Editor/Chief of Section (P-5), a Deputy Editor/Information Officer (P-3), an Editorial Assistant (G-5), and a Secretary (G-4). For the past eight years, UNICEF supplied the funding for an extrabudgetary Managing Editor post (P-4). UNICEF, however, recently informed the Department that after February 1997 this funding would no longer be available. Extrabudgetary funds are also used to pay for a General Service (desktop publishing) post and for additional temporary Professional staff needed to help write/edit the publication. The 1996-1997 regular budget revised appropriation for the Section was US$ 1.09 million, while $250,000 was allocated to the Section in 1996 from the Africa Recovery Trust Fund.

7. Africa Recovery is published four times a year in English and French. The Section also produces other information materials (two major information kits and a briefing paper in 1996, for example), while carrying out numerous other tasks associated with the general mandate to raise global awareness of the African economic crisis. The target audience has always been and remains the media, key opinion-leaders and decision makers in the Government, aid and donor communities, as well as leading non-governmental organizations and academics. Approximately 30,000 copies of each issue (some 23,000 in English and 7,000 in French) have been distributed worldwide since the publication's inception in 1987. Currently, about 16,247 copies are distributed to individuals, institutions and organizations that have requested them, with the majority going to Africa (5,485), North America (5,377) and Europe (4,229). Another 12,251 copies are distributed mainly through UNDP field offices and United Nations

information centres around the world. The remaining copies are distributed to offices at Headquarters and to permanent missions in New York.

8. The extensive mailing list of the Africa Recovery Section, which is regularly updated, includes separate priority categories for major international and African media that allow the Section to disseminate information materials to them in advance of general distribution. Up until September 1995, the Section had an extrabudgetary General Service staff member working full time on the mailing list, but owing to declines in extrabudgetary contributions, that post was not filled when it became vacant. Africa Recovery is distributed free of charge to its primary audience, since the Section's clear mandate is to disseminate information on Africa's economic situation as widely as possible. However, about 300 recipients send contributions to the Africa Recovery Trust Fund for the magazine.

9. Africa Recovery was one of the Department's first publications to be designed on a desktop publishing system (since 1990). All photos are now scanned and placed on computer disk along with print files of the publication, which results in significant cost savings at the external printing stage.

10. In seeking to heighten awareness of Africa's critical economic situation, Africa Recovery focuses on the key themes of African development highlighted by the General Assembly, in a manner consistent with the concerns of the United Nations New Agenda for Development of Africa. These themes range from international developments that have repercussions for Africa's economic and social situation, including United Nations global conferences, the consequences for Africa of international trade liberalization after the Uruguay Round and the work of the World Trade Organization (WTO), to the efforts of African countries themselves to improve domestic policies and achieve effective implementation. Specific issues include debt, development aid and foreign direct investment, as well as regional economic integration and South-South cooperation. Africa Recovery also plays an important role in disseminating information on the various forms of support that the United Nations system gives to the continent's economic and social development efforts. Africa Recovery gathers the relevant information from a wide range of sources within and outside the United Nations system, then analyses and presents it in an accessible manner to its broad readership, from a United Nations perspective.

11. Because of the publication's unique mandate to focus on a single world region and the range of issues it covers, there is no editorial overlap with other United Nations publications. On the contrary, 81 per cent of the respondents to a readership survey conducted by the Department in 1994 stated that Africa Recovery provided them with information not regularly available in any other publication.

12. The impact of Africa Recovery in raising awareness about the African economic crisis has been repeatedly noted in several programme evaluation reports. In an independent in-depth assessment of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa conducted by UNDP in 1993, the evaluators stated that the periodical was read by both donors and recipients, that its articles were impartial and to the point, and that it had been highly recommended for how it had exposed the problems of African debt. An appraisal of the United Nations

Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development conducted in 1991 referred to Africa Recovery as a high quality informative magazine and cited it as an excellent example of what can be done for the sensitization of appropriate audiences, through dissemination of appropriate information.

13. In this connection, the 1994 survey by the Department of Public Information indicated that its highly educated and professional readership described Africa Recovery as very useful in diverse ways. Indeed, 73 per cent of respondents said they used the publication in their professional work and as a reference source. Many described it as an indispensable education tool and the most useful single source of information on Africa's economic development needs. It should be noted that the real readership of Africa Recovery is substantially higher than is indicated by its print-run of some 30,000 copies. Over half the respondents in the 1994 readership survey said that on average, up to four other people read their copy of the publication. In order to make it easier for even greater numbers of people to have access to the publication, Africa Recovery articles will soon be regularly available through the United Nations Internet website.

14. Africa Recovery's articles and editorials have been instrumental in alerting the media to the nature of Africa's economic crisis and the actions being taken to overcome it. These materials have been reproduced in numerous African newspapers and magazines, as well as in various publications with worldwide circulation, such as The Economist, the Financial Times, the Guardian, Le Soir, The New York Times and The Washington Post. In 1988 and 1992, Africa Recovery won the Judge's Prize in the World Hunger Media Awards. It shared this award with The Atlantic Monthly, Newsweek, The Washington Post and the Cable News Network. No other United Nations periodical has won this award.

15. Finally, perhaps the most telling indication of support for Africa Recovery's impact has been the substantial extrabudgetary support it has received from various United Nations agencies and development organizations. Over the past 10 years, more than $3 million has been donated to the Africa Recovery Trust Fund.

III. DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS

16. A self-financing publication entering its nineteenth year, Development Business provides bidding information on development projects financed by the United Nations and the world's leading development banks, including the World Bank. Development Business assists developing countries to procure goods and services at internationally competitive prices and thus to maximize the purchasing power of their development credits and loans. It also serves private sector firms in both the developed and developing countries by publicizing opportunities for them to compete for billions of dollars in international contracts each year. The publication sells for $495 per year and appears twice a month. The Department's Development Business Unit provides faster and more selective access to project information via Scan-a-Bid, an on-line service.

17. The Department launched Development Business in 1978 with the support of the World Bank and the African, Asian, Caribbean and Inter-American Development

Banks. At present, all of these institutions require their borrowers to advertise bidding opportunities related to bank projects in Development Business. In 1992, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development also chose Development Business for its borrowers; the North American Development Bank came on board in 1995. Development Business is the only publication worldwide that pulls together procurement data on all of the major development banks. It is the Department's only periodical with a substantial private sector audience.

18. The founders of Development Business envisioned it as a means of attracting competitive bids from private sector firms interested in supplying bank-financed projects throughout the developing world. Governments that borrowed from the five founding development banks would receive free space to advertise their invitations to bid; the banks would provide related project information; and the private sector firms that bid would finance the venture via paid subscriptions.

19. With $21 billion in loans in fiscal 1996, the World Bank is the largest source of project financing published in Development Business. From the mid-1980s, the Department and the World Bank published almost identical World Bank procurement information and competed for subscribers. As of 30 June 1995, the World Bank and the Department signed a two-year agreement that converted this competitive relationship into a cooperative one. The agreement is currently being renegotiated; included for discussion is a possible joint venture to create an Internet version of the publication.

20. Development Business satisfies the needs of several audiences. By publicizing contracts up for bid on projects financed by the development banks, it assists the developing countries and those in transition to market economies to purchase goods at internationally competitive prices. As the service is provided free of charge, Development Business saves borrowers hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising fees each year. In addition, the publication advertises projects financed or executed by the United Nations, helping the Organization to obtain competitively priced goods and services.

21. Development Business also alerts private sector firms in the developed and developing countries to opportunities to do business in the developing countries. In fiscal 1996, for example, the World Bank made payments in excess of $9.4 billion to firms supplying bank projects, including companies from China, France, Germany, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Non-governmental organizations also read Development Business to obtain project information.

22. According to a readership survey conducted in 1994, most Development Business subscribers found the publication a valuable resource that served their needs. The publication received high grades from those surveyed for content, timeliness and usefulness. Over 70 per cent of the respondents contacted the project executing agency of the developing country listed in Development Business for more information. Between 45 and 68 per cent requested bid documents, over 50 per cent submitted a bid or proposal as a result of receiving Development Business, and more than 25 per cent won contracts based on information in the publication.

23. The Development Business Unit derives its income from the sale of the publication, the Scan-a-Bid on-line service and advertising space. The Unit continues to generate cash surpluses, which are being used to build a reserve fund mandated by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.[2]

24. Development Business adheres to a strict twice-monthly publication schedule. A one-year subscription consists of 24 issues of a tabloid-size newspaper, which includes 28 monthly summaries of projects pending loan/credit approval (12 summaries of World Bank projects, averaging 106 pages each in 1996; 12 summaries of Inter-American Development Bank projects, averaging 48 pages each, and four summaries of African Development Bank projects, averaging 16 pages each).

25. The publication's on-line version, Scan-a-Bid, is available through the Knight-Ridder Agency, with which the Unit has a revenue-sharing agreement. The Development Business databases sell for $90 per hour for connect time and $1.31 per retrieval (documents displayed or printed by the user).

26. The print-run for Development Business averaged 6,000 copies per issue in 1996. Worldwide, 45 per cent of subscribers are located in Europe and Central Asia, 33 per cent in North America, 10 per cent in the Asia and Pacific region, 6 per cent in Central/South America and the Caribbean and 6 per cent in Africa. Subscription order forms appear in each issue of Development Business. Recent back issues are sent in response to inquiries.

27. Of the publication's current 3,637 subscribers, only 292 receive it free of charge. Bulk copies are sent to the development banks to be used by task/project managers, country directors and procurement officers. They are also used to promote the publication at bank seminars. Copies are distributed free of charge to United Nations information centres, field offices of UNDP, and other agencies and programmes of the United Nations system.

28. The procurement information published by Development Business is supplied by the banks and other institutions whose information appears in the newspaper or by the developing country government agency responsible for the project. The newspaper's articles focus on business trends in the developing countries, including privatization, private sector involvement in infrastructure projects and changes in the investment climate. Articles also appear regarding the development activities of the banks and the United Nations. These articles are written by journalists whose work also appears in The New York Times, the Financial Times, Institutional Investor and Business Week.

29. Additionally, the newspaper includes a two to three-page advertising section entitled "The International Business Guide"; procurement sections for each financing/executing institution containing invitations (in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese) to bid on contracts financed or executed by the banks and the United Nations system, including UNDP, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of Project Services; and announcements of contracts awarded.

30. The newspaper's supplements contain a list of development projects under consideration by the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development

Bank and the World Bank. Project entries, listed by region, country and economic sector, differ by bank but tend to include the government agency to be contacted for more information and the goods and services likely to be procured.

31. The staff of the Development Business Unit consists of an Editor (P-4) and a trilingual (English, French and Spanish) Copy Editor/Production Manager (P-3). There are six General Service staff in New York and two in the Washington office. The Editor sets the publication's policy with respect to quality and content and writes for Development Business, in addition to administering, planning and supervising the Unit's work. The Editor prepares and manages the Unit's $1.4 million annual budget, with the goal of maximizing output while holding down costs. This includes working with staff to see that successful production, marketing, advertising and client-servicing procedures are observed and outdated ones changed. The Editor coordinates the activities of the in-house staff and the external typesetting firm, the printer (no capacity exists in-house), the mail handler and the mailer. Outside firms are procured by competitive bidding and monitored closely for quality and timeliness. The Unit's internal typesetting needs are satisfied by desktop publishing.

32. In meeting the specialized information and international publication needs of its worldwide audience, as well as in terms of its scope, periodicity, timeliness and self-financing nature, Development Business is not similar to any other United Nations publication. The 1994 readership survey revealed that more than 60 per cent of respondents filed or kept some or all of the publication for future reference, between 45 and 50 per cent routed some or all of it to others in their organization and about one quarter placed it in a library or information area. Almost one third of subscribers were presidents, chief executives, executive vice-presidents or corporate officers; more than one quarter were in export sales or business development; and approximately 15 per cent were in professional, scientific, technical or library-related disciplines.

IV. DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

33. Development Update, an eight-page bimonthly periodical, provides succinct, authoritative and current information on the development work of the United Nations system in an easy-to-read format. It is the only publication to provide timely systemwide coverage of United Nations initiatives in the development field.

34. Its coverage includes reports about the deliberations on the United Nations agenda for development and on the work of the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO. New United Nations economic and social publications are reviewed, and there is coverage of the Organization's assistance programmes in such diverse fields as health, infrastructure, new technology, the advancement of women, criminal justice and government administration. Interviews with leading United Nations figures, including Presidents of the General Assembly, leaders of global conferences, agency heads and high-level officials, technical experts and diplomats representing groups such as the Group of 77 or the European Union, clarify and enliven these issues. A useful regular feature is a calendar of current and upcoming United Nations development-related events.

35. The publication was begun in January 1994 to raise awareness about the issues relating to the cycle of international development conferences being held by the United Nations during the 1990s. Since then, Development Update has expanded its coverage to include major development-related activities of the United Nations system.

36. Initially, Development Update was financed entirely from temporary assistance funds made available to the Department for the promotion of the cycle of development-oriented international conferences. More recently, it has been absorbed within the Department's regular budget. Rather than having specialized staff solely dedicated to its production, the publication is produced by one Professional staff member who, in addition to other duties, acts as Editor/ Writer. Desktop composition, proofreading, distribution and other related functions are carried out by various staff members of the Development and Human Rights Section of the Department. This keeps costs low, while ensuring that the staff working on the publication are fully conversant with development matters.

37. The content of Development Update is determined by a departmental editorial advisory group. The group clears the final text and layout before sending it for internal printing, which is in two colours. The Editor proposes the contents of each issue and researches and writes the articles on the agreed-upon topics. The Editor finalizes the placement and length of articles for each issue, working with the desktop publishing assistant, before final review by the editorial advisory group. The periodical is published in English only.

38. Despite its limited size and simple format, the modestly resourced Development Update has generated considerable interest among traditional United Nations audiences, including policy makers, media, academic and research institutions and non-governmental organizations. Supportive and complimentary messages are regularly received via postal and electronic mail, and the publication's growing influence is indicated by the willingness of high-level policy makers to be interviewed for news stories. The print-run of Development Update is 20,000. Bulk copies are distributed to United Nations information centres and UNDP and other United Nations field offices for local dissemination. United Nations information centres report interest in the publication, and some have designed special distribution for people of national influence. It is also distributed throughout the United Nations system and to United Nations Associations, and United Nations depository and other libraries.

39. Although it has not been promoted or advertised, Development Update, which is distributed free of charge, has compiled a wide mailing list for subscriptions that have been received since publication began in 1994. The readers come from a range of organizations: universities, corporations and investment firms, development assistance programmes, student groups, community organizations, research institutions and periodicals, including such mainstream media as The New York Times and the Asian Wall Street Journal. A recent analysis of the regional composition of the mailing list is as follows: Africa, 16 per cent; Asia, 15 per cent; Europe, 20 per cent; North America, 22 per cent; Central/South America and the Caribbean, 17 per cent; and Western Asia, 10 per cent.

40. Development Update is posted on the United Nations home page on the Internet. In addition, it is electronically distributed to United Nations information centres prior to the printing and distribution of hard copies.

41. An editorial redesign of Development Update is currently under consideration. The objective would be to make the publication a vehicle for opinion and debate among leading development voices, while maintaining its current function as a source of development news. This would involve soliciting original manuscripts, as well as conducting interviews and arranging debates and similar activities that could be used as the basis for articles and extended question-and-answer features. One possibility under discussion is to devote each issue largely to a single topic.

42. Other aspects under review are the feasibility of introducing photographs and making more extensive use of graphics, as well as publication on a bimonthly schedule, changes in typography and format, simultaneous production in French and the potential of Development Update as a sales item. However, these discussions presuppose that substantial additional resources would be allocated to Development Update, and in the current financial situation, this is not assured.

V. OTHER RECURRENT PUBLICATIONS

A. UN Chronicle

43. Since its inception as a monthly in 1964, the Department's quarterly magazine UN Chronicle has had a long-standing tradition of coverage of the Organization's activities in the sphere of development. In 1996 alone, the publication carried cover stories on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, as well as major articles on the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Solar Summit, and the World Food Summit, while providing follow-up coverage of issues related to previous global conferences. Other development-related articles published during 1996 related to: the effects of desertification on development and environment; an essay by the Administrator of UNDP on development cooperation; reports on the activities of UNCTAD, ILO, WFP and other development-oriented programmes and agencies; and efforts to assist public administration and financial management capacities in developing countries.

44. In addition, the UN Chronicle has introduced a number of new sections that regularly include development issues. One such section, "UNreported", considers United Nations field activities and issues, and has included stories on the Organization's development projects in various Member States. Another new occasional section, "HealthWatch", focuses on health issues, including ones primarily affecting the developing world.

45. The magazine has also continued its regular coverage of development-related actions of the General Assembly, in particular those of the Second and Third Committees, and of the Economic and Social Council, as well as its review of books from within and outside the United Nations system which often concern development issues.

46. In its efforts to reach out to a wider audience and increase its subscription base, the UN Chronicle has agreed with the Sales and Marketing Section to put its redesigned contents pages on the United Nations home page, and to include a link to the Sales and Marketing Section that would facilitate subscriptions. It is also exploring the possibility of including "hyperlinks" on the magazine's contents web page to several important articles in each issue.

B. Notes for Speakers

47. Notes for Speakers, now entitled UN Briefing Papers, is an annual publication, which on a number of occasions in recent years has produced issues dealing specifically with development themes. The publication was first issued in 1989 to provide a resource for speakers and others engaged in public outreach. As originally planned, the annual series would alternate issues providing a general review of the work of the Organization in priority areas with issues devoted to a particular theme. For example, Notes for Speakers were produced on the themes of environment and development in 1991 and human rights in 1993. Since 1995, there have been editions on social development and the advancement of women (both timed to coincide with the major conferences on these issues) and on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which provided information on the Organization's overall achievements in the key areas of its mandate - peace and security, development, human rights and international law.

48. The present edition, due to be published in early 1997 under its new title, UN Briefing Papers, is on the world conferences, and therefore focuses very much on the key development issues that have been addressed in the recent cycle of major conferences. Each issue of this publication runs to between 80 and 100 pages.

49. The publication is produced in English, French and Spanish and is printed internally. The editorial rationale of the series is to provide relevant and concrete information on the Organization's achievements in particular areas of its work for use by United Nations officials, non-governmental organizations, academics and the media. Drafting requires a careful selection of material, in close consultation with the substantive offices concerned, and presentation in a reader-friendly language and format designed for speedy retrieval of information. In addition, the series provides ancillary information, such as an extensive bibliography of relevant United Nations publications. The current edition on the world conferences has relied entirely on internal research, drafting, formatting and printing, in order to keep non-staff costs at a minimum. French and Spanish translations still entail external costs.

50. The series is the result of an assessment of the needs of those engaged in public outreach, making use of United Nations information centres and the Public Inquiries Unit, which runs a Speakers' Bureau, for feedback. The publication has proven very popular. Between 10,000 and 15,000 copies of the English edition are printed and 5,000 each of the French and Spanish. Because of high demand from United Nations information centres and non-governmental organizations, additional press-runs were required for the English versions of the editions on the advancement of women and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Dissemination is mainly through United Nations information

centres and other United Nations field offices, with additional direct distribution in-house and to the media, non-governmental organizations and individual speakers and researchers. Recent editions have also been made available on the United Nations home page.

51. Over the last year, there has also been a growing sales interest in the publication, at least for the English language version. In consultation with the Department's Sales and Marketing Section, the name of the series was changed to UN Briefing Papers to make clearer its relevance to a wider audience, particularly university-level students, with a view to increasing sales. To further broaden the appeal of the publication, and taking advantage of internal desktop technology, the design has also been enhanced with the use of illustrations. The successful promotion of the series may require larger print-runs. The changes do not involve any additional production costs. The editorial approach to the series also remains the same. Free copies will continue to be distributed through the network of United Nations information centres.

52. Titles for forthcoming issues in the series are still to be determined, but subjects under consideration include a general review of the work of the Organization in priority areas and the issue of reform of the United Nations.

C. Other publications

53. In addition to the above periodicals, the Department, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, generates a wealth of information on development issues within its regular programme of work. This information is presented in different print formats, such as backgrounders, booklets, books, brochures, fact sheets, press kits and reference papers. Some of the development-related issues covered by these publications during 1996 included the following: women, homes and communities; the impact of armed conflict on children; partnerships for urban environment; United Nations action against poverty; protecting the global environment; poverty and development; population and urbanization; and public administration and development, to name a few.

54. To conclude, it should be noted that many of these publications, together with the contents of all periodicals reviewed in the present report, are frequently translated or adapted by United Nations information centres into various language versions to meet the needs and preferences of their local target audiences.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/47/6/Rev.1).

[2] See A/CN.1/R.1162 of 4 November 1992.

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Substantive questions

Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 11 of its resolution 51/138 B of 13 December 1996, the General Assembly referred to the integration of United Nations information centres with the field offices of the United Nations system in general. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue the integration exercise in a cost-effective manner and whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the views of the host country and ensuring that the information functions and the autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected and to report thereon to the Committee on Information.

2. As requested by the General Assembly, the present report provides an update on the status of the integration exercise since the last report on the subject was prepared for consideration by the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session, in 1994 (A/AC.198/1994/5).

II. Background

3. In his 1994 report, the Secretary-General stated that the main objectives underlying his 1992 decision to integrate the United Nations information centres with the field operations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were:

(a) To present a unified image of the United Nations in the field;

(b) To enhance information activities in all areas of the Organization's work, including development issues;

(c) To achieve economies of scale through the sharing of common services;

(d) To facilitate inter-agency coordination and avoid duplication.

4. Agreements between the Department of Public Information and UNDP were reached in 1992, and joint letters were subsequently sent to the 16 offices mentioned in paragraph 5 below, outlining policies and guidelines for the integrated operation. These letters specified, in particular, that there should be respect for the prevailing rules and regulations of the United Nations Secretariat regarding administrative, budgetary and personnel management in the information centres.

5. When integration was implemented in 1992, it involved information centres in those locations where the

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UNDP Resident Representative or United Nations Resident Coordinator was serving concurrently as full-time Director of the United Nations information centre, with the exception of Cairo. Since then, 18 information centres, namely, Algiers, Ankara, Antananarivo, Asunción, Bucharest, Cairo, Colombo, Kabul, Kathmandu, Kinshasa, La Paz, Lomé, Managua, Maseru, Monrovia, Panama City, San Salvador and Yangon, have been integrated. The information centres in Kabul, Monrovia and San Salvador, however, are temporarily closed.

6. In February 1996, the Government of the Philippines indicated its support for the integration of the United Nations information centre in Manila with the UNDP office in the Philippines. Pending final agreement, the United Nations Resident Coordinator has been designated as Acting Director of the centre.

7. In 1995, the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/31 B of 6 December 1995, recommended the continuation of the integration exercise whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, while taking into account the views of the host country and ensuring that the information functions and autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected. As part of the reform measures announced by the Secretary-General in March 1997, the integration process will be continued.

III. Overview of present situation

8. The integration process has proceeded along the lines indicated by the General Assembly. Cooperation between the Department of Public Information and UNDP in the integrated centres has resulted in cost savings in two areas: reduction in the number of international staff by more than 30 per cent since 1992, and the installation and maintenance of shared communications systems.

9. A Department of Public Information/UNDP mechanism has been established at the highest levels to address specific problems relating to integration. The group regularly examines the current situation in the field with a view to developing a framework for enhanced cooperation, while ensuring full implementation of the public information mandate. Accordingly, the Department expects to be consulted in the selection and performance evaluation of those Resident Representatives and/or Resident Coordinators who also serve as Directors of United Nations information centres. The Department continues its efforts to improve the capacity of those officials to promote an informed understanding of the work of the Organization among local constituents in a timely and cost-effective manner. In addition, the Department has directed specific attention to strengthening the role of National Information Officers, who have day-to-day responsibility for programme delivery in the integrated centres. The Department is also making every effort to enhance feedback from the integrated centres. Mindful of the importance of information as a strategic tool for successful field operations, the Department has recently expanded its briefing programmes for the heads of all UNDP field offices.

10. As regards efficiency gains and cost savings in the use of information technologies, about 20 United Nations information centres, including 9 that are integrated and/or headed by a UNDP Resident Representative, currently benefit from sharing UNDP communications facilities. This cooperation includes the provision of such services as Higgins electronic mail or access to the Internet by means of a UNDP link. Some information centres also share local area network (LAN) environments with UNDP and receive LAN maintenance services provided by UNDP.

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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Evaluation of the United Nations information centres

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/138 B of 13 December 1996, called upon the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Committee on Information on an evaluation of the United Nations information centres. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

2. The report is also in part a response to the internal self-evaluation system established by the Secretary-General in 1986, according to which the Department of Public Information undertakes regular assessments of its programmed activities and products.

3. The broad objective of the study was to evaluate the functioning of United Nations information centres and determine which areas of their activities needed to be rationalized, strengthened or further reviewed, as indicated by the Committee on Information. Specifically, the study sought to:

(a) Assess the performance of United Nations information centres, particularly in the light of the new challenges and priorities imposed on the Organization's work and of the resources made available to United Nations information centres;

(b) Analyse the relationship between United Nations information centres and local partners or concerned international actors, in view of the latter's potential to contribute to an informed understanding of the Organization's work;

(c) Review the prevalence and use of new information technologies and their effect on the work of United Nations information centres and redisseminators in promoting the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Original mandate and functions of United Nations information centres

4. United Nations information centres were created by the General Assembly. In the same resolution in which it established the Department of Public Information in 1946 (resolution 13 (I)), the Assembly recognized the need for information centres when it called for the setting up of branch offices of the Department of Public Information in order to ensure that peoples in all parts of the world were fully informed of the aims and activities of the United Nations. In its resolution 42/162 A of 8 December 1987, the Assembly reaffirmed its recognition of the unique function performed by the United Nations information centres.

5. The network of United Nations information centres represents a major element in the Organization's public information strategies and an important means of stimulating local interest in global issues. The main activities of the centres fall into two broad categories. First, they disseminate immediate information on current developments at the United Nations, by keeping the media abreast of the latest news, responding to inquiries, organizing press conferences, producing news bulletins, giving interviews, and monitoring and responding to the media. Secondly, they engage in activities aimed at promoting a better understanding of the principles and purposes of the United Nations. To ensure that information reaches as broad an audience as possible, United Nations information centres maintain and nurture a network of redisseminators, including local media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and other public and private sector partners. In cooperation with United Nations information centres, these redisseminators play an important role in furthering public information outreach programmes by organizing special commemorative events or conducting campaigns to raise awareness of the Organization's work.

6. The United Nations has witnessed growth both in its membership and in the number of its subsidiary organs, as well as in the number of global problems it is being called upon to resolve. Inevitably, this has resulted in an increased workload for United Nations information centres since there are more specialized issues to keep abreast of and a corresponding increase in constituents interested in these issues who demand services. Furthermore, United Nations information centres serve as local focal points for information emanating from the United Nations system as a whole. They have become the main depository and disseminator of both information materials by the Department of Public Information and of those of United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies.

7. The relations of Directors of United Nations information centres with the media is of critical importance. On a priority basis, United Nations information centres are instructed to respond swiftly to inaccurate or negative

media reports about the Organization. Equally important, Directors of United Nations information centres are encouraged to preempt negative reporting by maintaining close and continuous contacts with media representatives and opinion-makers, regularly briefing them on developments of interest and alerting them to breaking news.

8. By virtue of their presence in a particular country, United Nations information centres are inevitably called upon to perform a variety of non-information tasks at the request of various departments of the Secretariat or other parts of the United Nations system, including intergovernmental bodies. These tasks range from routine services - processing payments on behalf of other United Nations offices, administering examinations on behalf of the Office of Human Resources Management or providing logistical assistance to visiting officials, to name a few - to extraordinary duties such as inspecting airplanes on behalf of subsidiary organs of the Security Council to ensure adherence to sanctions.

9. In cooperation with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, staff of United Nations information centres periodically inspect and provide assistance and advice on the maintenance of the collections of United Nations depository libraries located in the area covered by the centre concerned.

B. Management of information centres and Headquarters support

10. United Nations information centres are typically small offices with four or five staff members. In some countries they are headed by a Director, who is a staff member of the Department of Public Information, while in others the Resident Coordinator or Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) serves as Director or Acting Director. The local support staff usually consists of a National Information Officer or Information Assistant, a Reference Assistant, an Administrative Assistant, a Secretary and, in some locations, a driver who also serves as clerk or messenger. Although the volume and complexity of work has increased, the number of posts available to United Nations information centres, in both the Professional and General Service categories, has been drastically reduced since the late 1980s. Despite the overall loss of posts, new United Nations information centres have opened since 1992 in Bonn, Pretoria, Sana'a, Warsaw and Windhoek.

11. Currently, there are approximately 30 United Nations information centres headed by a UNDP Resident Representative/Coordinator as a result of an initiative begun in 1992 to integrate United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices. The driving force behind integration was both one of concept (projecting a unified image of the United Nations in the field) and of cost-effectiveness (achieving savings through the sharing of staff, common services and, in some locations, common premises). Over the past five years, the number of the Department's Professional posts in the field has been reduced by 38 per cent. Against this background, integration can be viewed as an element in the ongoing reform process of the Organization, in which diminished resources necessitate the search for creative and practical solutions.

12. While integration can technically be achieved through a simple agreement among the Department of Public Information, UNDP and the host Government, to make it truly successful it is also necessary to build in each office a commonality of purpose and a shared commitment to realize the public information mandate on behalf of the Organization as a whole. The Department of Public Information and UNDP are working closely together, with a view to strengthening the integrated Centres.[1]

13. At Headquarters, the Information Centres Service of the Department is responsible for the overall management of United Nations information centres, which currently number 65. The Information Centres Service also provides information support to six United Nations information services and eight United Nations offices. Headed by a Chief at the D-1 level, the Information Centres Service has a total of 10 Professional and 12 General Service staff members who provide administrative support, programme support and information dissemination to the global network of United Nations information centres, which currently consist of 39 Professional and 256 local-level posts (including National Information Officer). In the biennium 1998-1999, it is anticipated that the number of the Department's field posts will be further reduced.

14. In overseeing the network of United Nations information centres, the Information Centres Service negotiates and consults with Member States and substantive departments of the Secretariat, as needed, on all aspects of the operation of the centres. The Information Centres Service is responsible for ensuring that United Nations information centres are managed in a manner that makes the most efficient use of available human and financial resources, and that all relevant administrative instructions, Staff Rules and Regulations and Financial Rules are complied with. The Information Centres Service allocates funds to United Nations information centres, authorizes expenditures and handles all financial, administrative and personnel-related matters in liaison with other offices concerned. In 1996, approximately US$ 5.5 million was available from the regular budget for the operating costs of all United Nations information centres. These funds were supplemented by host government contributions of approximately US$ 1 million, which helped cover operating costs such as rental, maintenance and utilities.

15. The Information Centres Service provides guidance to United Nations information centres in the planning of their information activities and coordinates, as needed, information support and policy with substantive offices at Headquarters and within the United Nations system. Programme guidelines and advice are provided through frequent contacts by telephone, facsimile and electronic mail, as well as through written instructions and a United Nations information centres Operations Manual, which was updated in 1996. Since United Nations information centres are small offices located far from Headquarters, contacts between the Information Centres Service and the field are key in fostering a sense of partnership in a larger team effort and encouraging cooperation among the centres.

16. United Nations information centres are required to report regularly on their activities and programme developments. Reporting procedures were revised in 1996 to ensure a more continuous, thorough and systematic review by the Information Centres Service of the activities of United Nations information

centres. Based on an analysis of the activity reports, feedback is provided to the centres in the form of practical suggestions and comments.

17. The Information Centres Service is responsible for ensuring that the centres receive on a timely basis the information material they need to carry out their work. Recent dramatic changes in communication technology have enabled the Information Centres Service to expand its electronic capability to communicate faster and more efficiently with the field. In this regard, the Information Centres Service has developed and is currently implementing a project with the International Computing Centre and the Société internationale des communications aéronautiques to replace its WANG-based communication network. Completion of this project is expected further to improve communication between the centres and Headquarters.

18. As with most technological dependencies, however, electronic dissemination is not without its problems. Its effectiveness depends on both internal and external factors, such as the reliability of local Internet providers, the quality of equipment and its support, availability of trained staff, and the state of local communications infrastructures (see annex I).

III. METHODOLOGY

19. To meet the objectives of the study stated in paragraph 3 above, a two-pronged methodological approach was designed: first, a background review was undertaken; and, secondly, a survey of Directors of United Nations information centres and local redisseminators was designed and dispatched to the field.

20. The background review involved an analysis of available information on the overall functions and activities of United Nations information centres and the extent of support provided by the Department through the Information Centres Service.

21. The second part of the study consisted of two surveys: one completed by centre Directors and the other by randomly selected local redisseminators or target audiences, such as the media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations, including United Nations associations. Two separate questionnaires were mailed to 58 centre Directors in October 1996. Both questionnaires dealt with activities carried out by United Nations information centres, the relationship with local partners, and access to and use of new information technologies. The review period was established as September 1995 through August 1996.

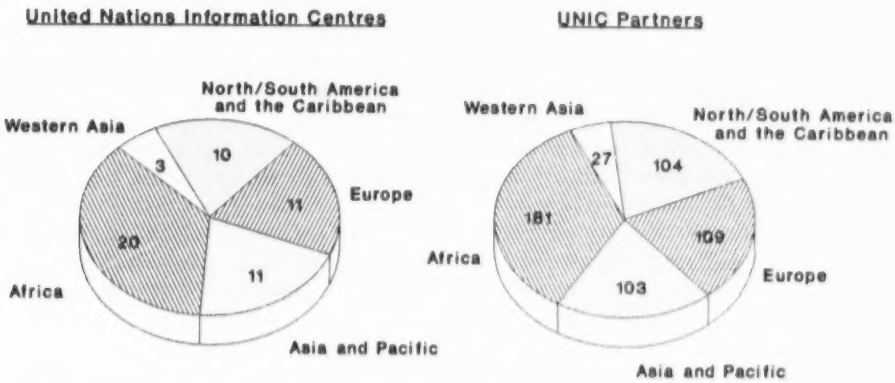
22. Additionally, background data on telecommunication indicators in Member States hosting United Nations information centres were collected, together with information on the availability of new technologies in United Nations depository libraries (see annex I).

23. Although their work is closely related to that of United Nations information centres, United Nations information services and United Nations offices (information component) were not included in the survey because of differences in mandate, functions, budgetary arrangements and staffing.

IV. SURVEY RESULTS

24. During the review period, some centres were either inoperative or only partially operational (Bonn, Bujumbura, Kabul, Managua, Monrovia, San Salvador, Warsaw) and therefore only 58 United Nations information centres were included in the evaluation. Of these, 55 completed and returned the centre Directors' questionnaire; 50 of them administered the other questionnaire to a group of randomly selected local redisseminators (partners), yielding a total of 524 responses (see chart A below). Partners responding to the questionnaire represented a cross-section of the following: media organizations (28 per cent), educational institutions (19 per cent), non-governmental organizations and United Nations associations (17 per cent), individuals (16 per cent), Government offices (11 per cent), libraries (7 per cent), business corporations (1 per cent), with 1 per cent not indicating affiliation.

Chart A: Number of Survey Respondents



25. To facilitate the presentation of the survey results, the analysis of the data has been grouped into the following five categories: (a) outreach activities; (b) effect of budgetary reductions; (c) cooperation between United Nations information centres and local partners; (d) cooperation with the United Nations system; and (e) prevalence and use of new technologies.

A. Outreach activities

26. During the review period (September 1995 to August 1996), all United Nations information centres devoted a great deal of their resources to outreach activities intended to enhance an informed understanding of the United Nations. At the top of the list were the following: information support provided to local organizations; promotional activities in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations; and educational programmes such as Model United Nations, curriculum development and teacher training. Other activities

included seminars, journalists' encounters and workshops on specific United Nations issues, as well as dissemination of information, press conferences and briefings, exhibits and book fairs.

27. The responses received from United Nations information centres revealed that the production of local language versions of United Nations information material was a major aspect of their work, despite the limited budgetary resources available for this purpose. Responding to local needs, United Nations information centres also created their own local language information products covering general information on the United Nations system, such as structure, aims and activities, as well as information on specific issues such as global United Nations conferences and teaching about the United Nations. Most United Nations information centres use at least one local language, in addition to the United Nations official languages, to service or communicate with redisseminators and target audiences. Almost all United Nations information centres surveyed produce a newsletter, with print runs depending on demand and availability of resources. Annex II shows examples of languages in which information was produced and disseminated among local audiences.

28. Almost all United Nations information centres obtain regular, although unsystematic, feedback from their redisseminators and target audiences. This feedback - mostly in the form of letters containing critical comments or compliments on specific outreach activities - is analysed by each centre and reported to the Department of Public Information. United Nations information centres monitor local media coverage of the United Nations, sending newspaper clippings as well as excerpts of radio and television news programmes to the Department of Public Information, other Secretariat departments and other organizations of the United Nations system, often on a daily or weekly basis.

B. Effect of budgetary reductions

29. A large number of information-related activities planned by United Nations information centres during the review period were not carried out owing to diminished budgetary funds or to the freezing of vacant posts as a result of the financial crisis of the Organization. A majority of United Nations information centres reported that the restriction on travel had hampered their information outreach to areas away from their locations. Other information activities affected were the adaptation and production of print materials in local languages, multimedia activities about the United Nations and educational programmes. The financial crisis compelled United Nations information centres to take cost-saving measures, including limiting the use of telephone and facsimile, and to adjust their activities to the lower level of funds available in their budget. Almost all centres signalled with alarm that any further budget reductions would seriously jeopardize their capability to disseminate information, particularly if such cuts meant that the introduction of new communication and information technologies would be delayed or not fully implemented.

30. In the light of the recent budgetary reductions, information centres have had to depend increasingly on extrabudgetary funding to ensure that essential information activities are not discontinued. During the review period, the

centres received both financial and non-financial support from some of their partners, including organizations of the United Nations system. While they are being encouraged to seek outside support for special activities and events, a number of centres pointed out that the financial rules of the Organization imposed restrictions on their ability to receive external funds.

31. Governments contributed to information-related activities by sponsoring a number of events organized by United Nations information centres during the review period. However, efforts made by the centres to obtain host government contributions to their operating costs (rental, maintenance, utilities etc.), as well as to increase contributions already made by host Governments, were not entirely successful.

32. The lack of resources notwithstanding, almost all centres recorded major accomplishments during the review period, particularly in such areas as educational programmes and creation of their own "home pages", as well as radio and television programmes on priority United Nations issues.

C. Cooperation between United Nations information centres and local partners

33. Working in partnership with local institutions and organizations, United Nations information centres have established a vital link to the local community. The partners surveyed were generally very supportive of the work of centres and, conversely, United Nations information centres recognized the importance of enhancing working relations with these partners. All 55 centres surveyed provided regular services during the review period to more than 57,000 partners, comprising media organizations, non-governmental organizations and United Nations associations, educational institutions, libraries, government agencies and individuals. In any given month during the period, more than 21,000 partners sought the services of the United Nations information centres. During the same one-year period, more than 27,000 visitors - mainly students, researchers and media practitioners - used the centres' reference libraries.

34. A majority of the centre partners surveyed said that they had undertaken, on their own initiative, several public information projects and activities, often with the centres' support. The most frequently mentioned activities undertaken during the review period were Model United Nations and other educational programmes; preparation of reports and backgrounders for government delegates to the General Assembly; press coverage of United Nations activities; organization and co-sponsorship of seminars, workshops and conferences; and advocacy campaigns to raise public awareness about United Nations themes and issues. Also mentioned were such activities as production and co-production of radio and television programmes, adaptation into local languages of United Nations documents and publications, and dissemination of information on the Organization.

35. As interest in the United Nations has increased, concerned international actors have come to rely more on United Nations information centres to provide them with information on the issues dealt with by the Organization. An overwhelming majority (84 per cent) of centre partners surveyed said that they

considered the centres as the most reliable source of information on United Nations issues. According to 89 per cent of them, the United Nations information centre is their most useful partner and source of information for the preparation of awareness-raising activities or educational events on any of the issues dealt with by the United Nations.

36. Asked how the centres service their needs, a majority of partners cited the timely provision of information on United Nations daily developments; assistance in organizing Model United Nations and other educational programmes; personal research assistance and library services in general; and promotion of communication and cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system. For their part, United Nations information centres suggested the creation of a mechanism for coordinating information policy relating to political developments and peacekeeping operations, in order to improve their capability to respond rapidly to media queries.

37. While a majority of partners attached a great deal of importance to the presence of United Nations information centres in their regions, they also were of the view that much could be done by the centres to enhance their working relations with local partners. Among the problems cited in this context were a shortage of United Nations publications; the need for better library services and up-to-date reference material; the lack of modern equipment to facilitate retrieval of United Nations-related information; the inability of centre staff to travel to attend meetings or events organized by local partners away from the location of the centre; the need to organize and cover information activities in all parts of the country under the centre's jurisdiction; and the failure to provide local partners with transportation to attend United Nations events. A recurrent complaint among the centres' partners surveyed was that the centres were not adequately staffed to serve their local communities.

D. Cooperation with the United Nations system

38. As the focal points for public information in the field, United Nations information centres are constantly carrying out such information activities or services as relations with media and non-governmental organizations, dissemination of information and press monitoring (clippings) on behalf of organizations of the United Nations system. The centres underscored the need for better coordination and cooperation among organizations of the United Nations system, particularly in forging a unified outreach approach in a very competitive local and international media environment.

39. During the review period, United Nations information centres reported that they had rendered public information services to more than 40 organizations of the United Nations system, with the top 10 recipients being the following: UNDP, United Nations Population Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, World Health Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations International Drug Control Programme, International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund.

40. Most United Nations information centres devoted an average of five work-months to providing the services referred to in paragraph 38 above to organizations of the United Nations system. In some cases, the agencies and programmes provided both financial and non-financial contributions for the services rendered to them. Asked to estimate the cost to a United Nations agency or programme if it were to contract these public information services to a local private organization, United Nations information centres responded that in most cases they could cost about US$ 150,000 per year.

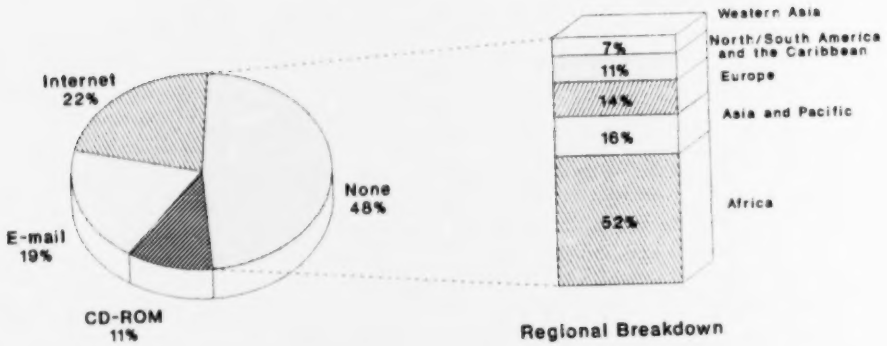
41. Aside from information activities, United Nations information centres regularly perform non-information tasks on behalf of various entities within the United Nations system, particularly Secretariat departments and offices. During the review period, United Nations information centres devoted an average of two work-months to performing such services as procurement coordination, logistical support for visiting senior officials, representation of the United Nations system, liaison with government ministries, assistance to the Office of Human Resources Management in organizing examinations and recruitment of staff, and other administrative tasks.

E. Prevalence and use of new technologies

42. New communication and information technologies are not as pervasive in all regions of the world as might be assumed. Basic telecommunication indicators, together with survey data on availability of new technologies at United Nations depository libraries (see annex I), as well as the results of the present study, show that these technologies are not widely accessible to most redisseminators of information on the United Nations. While most United Nations information centres are electronically connected to Headquarters to facilitate the receipt and accessing of United Nations documents and other information materials, electronic communication with local redisseminators is not prevalent. Almost one half of the local partners surveyed said that they had neither the services of the Internet, nor electronic mail nor CD-ROM (see chart B below). Most United Nations information centres disseminated information material on the United Nations largely by mail, messenger service, personal visits or the staging of special events.

43. Asked how the use of new technologies had affected their work during the review period, 74 per cent of United Nations information centres replied that personal visits and inquiries had increased and 83 per cent said that requests for print materials had gone up. A majority of centres reported receiving many visitors to their reference libraries who wished to avail themselves of the Internet and CD-ROM.

Chart B: Access to New Technologies
Among UNIC Partners



44. The survey results suggested that in other locations where partners or redisseminators had access to new communication technologies, the availability of ample information on the United Nations on the Internet had actually led to an increase in the number of inquiries and requests for centres' assistance. On the one hand, some individuals or organizations needed help in "navigating" the Internet and guidance on where precisely they could find information on a particular United Nations issue. On the other hand, a United Nations information centre was contacted, in many instances, by individuals or organizations that had consulted the United Nations "home page" and now wanted additional information from the centre. This suggests that the prevalence and use of new communication technologies in some regions of the world do not necessarily diminish the importance and use of other traditional means of information dissemination, nor do they substitute for interpersonal contacts and assistance.

45. Local redisseminators and target audiences in many regions are increasingly demanding the availability of the Internet and CD-ROM at centres' reference libraries, expecting the centres to be trendsetters in the use of new technologies. This demand also comes from regions where Internet services are available but most of the local users, such as university students and professors, do not have sufficient terminals and therefore need to consult the centre reference libraries on a regular basis. United Nations information centres called for an upgrading of their technological capabilities, for the training of their staff in the use of new communication technologies and for the centres to be kept abreast of relevant developments at Headquarters.

46. Although most centres reported that electronic communication had improved their contact with Headquarters, they still emphasized the need for more meetings and briefings, both regionally and at Headquarters, to enhance communication, information-sharing and feedback among United Nations information centres themselves and between them and the Information Centres Service. They

also stressed the importance of staff development seminars to strengthen professional expertise.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

47. When the General Assembly established the Department of Public Information, in 1946, it declared that the United Nations could not achieve its purposes unless the peoples of the world were fully informed of its aims and activities. While this basic mandate has remained unchanged over the years, several factors have affected the functions of United Nations information centres and the services they render to the public. The climate in the information marketplace today is more quick-paced, competitive and professionally challenging than when the first centres were opened. The proliferation of modern information technology carries enormous potential. The dramatic increase in both the number and influence of non-governmental organizations has also given added importance to the catalytic role of United Nations information centres in coordinating the efforts of these organizations on specific issues of concern to the United Nations in a manner relevant to the local community.

48. Local constituents rely on United Nations information centres as their most important source of information about the United Nations, and highly value the personalized services that the centres are able to provide.

49. Dissemination of information by United Nations information centres continues to be carried out mostly by traditional means, since the Internet, CD-ROM and other new technologies are not as widely used by centres' partners as might be assumed. Even in those locations where access to the Internet is prevalent, the use of new communications technology has not lessened the demand for print and audio-visual materials on the United Nations. On the contrary, the demand for services has increased, as United Nations information centres are able to customize, package and provide hands-on assistance to individuals and organizations.

50. United Nations information centres play a key role in engaging and supporting non-governmental organizations and other local organizations in community-based activities aimed at highlighting United Nations themes. By virtue of their close contact with the community and their knowledge of local interests and trends, United Nations information centres have a unique capability to tailor and deliver the United Nations message with maximum impact.

51. United Nations information centres produce information materials in various local languages to meet the needs and interests of the public in their locations, in line with the Department's mandate to reach as wide an audience as possible. These productions are often done through co-sponsorship and joint initiatives with centre partners, including organizations of the United Nations system.

52. United Nations information centres perform a wide range of information and non-information services on behalf of various departments of the Secretariat as well as organizations of the United Nations system. The value of these services can be seen in financial savings and efficient programme implementation.

53. Despite a reduction of 38 per cent in the number of Professional posts and 17 per cent in the number of local-level posts since 1992, United Nations information centres have made every possible effort to meet their mandated tasks through innovative approaches to their work, maximum use of the information technologies at their disposal, and staff who perform multiple tasks, in close consultation with Headquarters.

54. Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by the Committee on Information:

Recommendation 1

All organizations of the United Nations system should coordinate outreach activities with United Nations information centres, which serve as focal points for public information, in order to pool resources, avoid duplication and project a unified image of the United Nations in the field.

Recommendation 2

The adaptation and production of information material for local audiences should be continued and supported, in keeping with the mandate of the Department of Public Information to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Recommendation 3

The technological capabilities of United Nations information centres should be strengthened to enable them to perform their functions in a field where speed is of the essence, thus giving them more credibility and improving their standing in a highly competitive media environment.

Recommendation 4

Communication among United Nations information centres themselves and between United Nations information centres and Headquarters should be strengthened by holding briefings at Headquarters and regular regional meetings in order to share information, coordinate efforts and review areas of concern. The Information Centres Service should, subject to the overall resource constraints under the regular budget section of the Department of Public Information, be provided with adequate resources for that purpose.

Recommendation 5

The Department of Public Information should improve or facilitate access by centre Directors to in-depth background information pertaining to United Nations political issues in general and to peacekeeping missions in particular, in order to enhance their credibility when dealing with the media.

Recommendation 6

Staff development seminars should be organized on a regular basis to improve professional skills, particularly in the use of new communication technologies.

Recommendation 7

The budgetary arrangements for United Nations information centres should be reviewed with a view to making them flexible enough to accommodate local initiatives for obtaining external funds from such sources as non-governmental organizations, Governments, educational institutions, businesses and individuals.

Recommendation 8

Efforts to strengthen United Nations information centres integrated with UNDP field offices should be continued with a view to ensuring that the public information mandate of the Department of Public Information is effectively carried out by those offices.

Recommendation 9

The present means of obtaining audience feedback should be refined in order to draw up a set of survey guidelines for all United Nations information centres to enable them systematically to gauge the effectiveness of their services.

Notes

[1] A separate report on integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme is before the Committee (A/AC.198/1997/5).

Annex I

Selected telecommunication indicators for UNIC host countries and availability of electronic services at United Nations depository libraries

United Nations information centre host country	Telecommunication indicators[a]				No. of United Nations depository libraries[b]	No. of United Nations depository libraries providing:[c]					
						Internet services				CD-ROM services	
	Telephone lines/100 inhabitants	Estimated fax machines	No. of Internet hosts	No. of personal computers		Telnet	FTP	E-mail	WWW	Server	Reader
Argentina	15.99	50 000	5 312	850 000	7	2	2	3	2		4
Australia	50.96	475 000	309 562	5 200 000	7	6	3	5	6	6	6
Bahrain	24.23	5 730	142	29 250	1						
Bangladesh	0.23	2 000			1						
Belgium	45.75	165 000	30 621	1 400 000	4	2	2	2	2	1	3
Bolivia	3.45		66		1			1			1
Brazil	7.48	200 000	20 113	2 100 000	4						2
Burkina Faso	0.29			60							
Cameroon	0.45										
Colombia	9.98	100 000	2 262	630 000	2			1	1		1
Congo	0.81	110									
Czech Republic	23.65	73 552	21 856	550 000	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Denmark	61.26	250 000	50 557	1 414 000	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Egypt	4.63	21 591	591	194 000	3	1	1	2	1	1	2
France	55.80	1 900 000	151 173	7 800 000	9	5	2	6	4	5	8
Ghana	0.35	4 500	6	20 000	2						1
Greece	49.32	15 258	7 741	350 000	3						
India	1.29	50 000	788	1 200 000	14	4	2	4	2	2	4
Indonesia	1.69	85 000	2 351	730 000	2			1	1		
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	7.94	30 000	271		3						
Italy	43.35	202 000	73 364	4 800 000	7	1	1	1	1	1	1
Japan	48.72	6 000 000	269 327	19 100 000	14	7	6	5	8	5	9
Kenya	0.90	3 800	17	18 000	1						

/...

United Nations information centre host country	Telecommunication indicators[a]				No. of United Nations depository libraries[b]	No. of United Nations depository libraries providing:[c]					
						Internet services				CD-ROM services	
	Telephone lines/100 inhabitants	Estimated fax machines	No. of Internet hosts	No. of personal computers		Telnet	FTP	E-mail	WWW	Server	Reader
Lesotho	0.90	569			1		1	1			
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	5.88				2						1
Madagascar	0.24				1			1			1
Mexico	9.58	180 000	13 787	2 400 000	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Morocco	4.33	7 500	229	45 000	1						
Myanmar	0.32	1 419			1						
Namibia	5.06		11		1			1			1
Nepal	0.36	600	19		1			1			1
Nigeria	0.36			440 000	7			1			2
Pakistan	1.64	159 000	17	155 000	6	1	1	1	1		2
Panama	11.42		148		1						
Paraguay	3.08				1						
Peru	4.71	15 000	813	140 000	2			1			1
Philippines	2.09	35 000	1 771	770 000	5	1		2		2	3
Portugal	36.12	35 343	11 776	600 000	2	1	1	1	1		1
Romania	13.08	20 746	1 739	120 000	1						
Russian Federation	16.99	26 324	21 940	2 600 000	3		1	2			2
Senegal	0.98		14	60 000	2		1	2	1		2
South Africa	9.45	75 000	48 277	1 100 000	4	3	3	4	3	2	4
Spain	38.51	215 000	51 456	3 200 000	6	4	3	4	3	1	4
Sri Lanka	1.13	11 000	6	20 000	1						
Togo	0.53	10 000		175	1					1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	16.04	2 023	55	25 000	1	1	1	1	1		1
Tunisia	5.83	25 000	79	60 000	1						
Turkey	21.16	99 146	5 345	780 000	2	2	2	2	1	1	2

United Nations information centre host country	Telecommunication indicators[a]				No. of United Nations depository libraries[b]	No. of United Nations depository libraries providing:[c]					
						Internet services				CD-ROM services	
	Telephone lines/100 inhabitants	Estimated fax machines	No. of Internet hosts	No. of personal computers		Telnet	FTP	E-mail	WWW	Server	Reader
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	50.21	1 800 000	439 732	10 900 000	13	10	7	12	12	9	13
United Republic of Tanzania	0.30				1			1		1	
United States of America	62.71	14 052 000	6 054 959	86 300 000	39	37	37	36	38	29	37
Yemen	1.24	2 000			1						
Zaire	0.08	5 000									
Zambia	0.82	600	69		2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Zimbabwe	1.40	10 000	93	33 000	2	1		1			

Note: Blank spaces indicate that data are not available.

[a] Provided by the International Telecommunication Union from its World Telecommunication Development Report database (1993-1995).

[b] Excluding UNIC reference libraries, which also function as United Nations depository libraries. In Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Congo and Zaire, there are no United Nations depository libraries other than the UNIC. Source: List of Depository Libraries Receiving United Nations Material (ST/LIB/12/Rev.13 of 26 March 1996).

[c] Internal report entitled "Depository library system questionnaire 1996", prepared by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library (January 1997).

Annex II

Languages of information materials produced by United Nations information centres (partial list)

Region	Languages (examples)	Information materials (sample)
Africa	Afrikaans, Arabic, English, French, Hausa, Igbo, Kabye-Ewe, Kiswahili, Kituba, Lingala, Malagasy, Ndebele, Oshiwamho, Portuguese, Pulaar, Shona, Swahili, Woloff, Yoruba	An Agenda for Development An Agenda for Peace Basic Facts about the United Nations Charter of the United Nations
Asia and the Pacific	Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Bengali, Myanmar, Chinese, English, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese, Nepali, Pilipino, Sinhala, Tamil, Urdu	Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization United Nations in Brief Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Europe	Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish	Various: Fact sheets on the work of the Organization (Protecting the global environment; Setting the record straight; What's the United Nations)
North/South America and the Caribbean	Aymara, English, French, Guarani, Portuguese, Quechua, Spanish	On International Year for the Eradication of Poverty On Peacekeeping operations
Western Asia	Arabic, English, Turkish	On teaching about the United Nations On United Nations Conferences (Fourth World Conference on Women; Habitat II; World Food Summit)

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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
Nineteenth session
13-23 May 1997

SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

Activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit the reports of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to the Committee on Information at its consecutive sessions. The present report, covering the activities of JUNIC during 1996, has been prepared in response to that request.

2. JUNIC held its twenty-second session at the United Nations Office at Geneva, from 3 to 5 July 1996, under the chairmanship of Mr. Samir Sanbar, Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information. Directors of Information and officials of 26 United Nations bodies, including specialized agencies and related organizations, attended the session. The report on the session was presented to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). JUNIC considered a variety of matters relating to inter-agency cooperation in the field of public information. A brief summary of the discussion and an account of some of the follow-up action on decisions taken at the session on issues that could be of interest to the members of the Committee on Information is set out below.

3. JUNIC focused its deliberations on an open-ended discussion of ways and means of promoting better public understanding of the role and achievements of the United Nations. A number of members of the Committee expressed concern that in the current situation of dwindling financial resources throughout the United Nations system, there was a tendency in many organizations to cut the funding for public information activities, as public information work was difficult to define in quantitative terms. JUNIC agreed that at this time, as a means of broadening the support for its objectives and activities, the United Nations system as a whole needed to strengthen public outreach to its traditional supporters, such as non-governmental organizations, while at the same time

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reaching out to new audiences and potential supporters, such as youth, local authorities and other levels of civil society. Among potential new audiences and partners of the United Nations, JUNIC recognized, in particular, the importance of the business community as a partner in the promotion of socially friendly sustainable development, since the policies promoted by the United Nations were geared towards strengthening the private sector and its active participation in the development process. JUNIC agreed on the need to develop a joint message of the United Nations with global appeal, to be based on a critical analysis of both the positive and negative feedback from the recent coverage and public debate about the role and achievements of the Organization, and to consider a methodology of media outreach that would successfully counter the effects of the existing information overload. To improve coordination of public information activities, JUNIC decided to establish an open-ended working group based in New York to meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis in the inter-sessional period and discuss matters of mutual concern, and also to revive the bi-monthly JUNIC Information Bulletin, prepared by the JUNIC secretariat and distributed electronically to the members of JUNIC and to directors of information of bilateral development agencies, as a means of keeping informed and better coordinating the preparation of information products and activities.

4. JUNIC also discussed several issues pertaining to the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and recognized the vital role played by the Service in promoting and facilitating enhanced cooperation between the United Nations system and the non-governmental community. It also expressed concern over the difficulties faced by the Service as a result of the financial and budgetary crisis of the United Nations system and urged all sponsoring organizations to make every effort to maintain the funding level for the Service in the current biennium. Also, in view of the changing United Nations and global context for international cooperation and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, JUNIC endorsed a proposal for a strategic review of the role of the Service in the United Nations system.

5. JUNIC also discussed progress with regard to the participation of the United Nations system in the upcoming international expositions scheduled to take place at Lisbon in 1998 and at Hannover, Germany, in the year 2000, and agreed that any further action on both proposals would need to await action by the host Governments of the events on the terms of the United Nations participation, including financial considerations, as the United Nations could only take part in such events on a no-cost basis. On a related matter, JUNIC recommended and ACC agreed to consolidate the 1992 ACC guidelines for joint participation by the United Nations system in international expositions and the 1994 addendum thereto into a single document, for consideration and decision by JUNIC at its twenty-third session.

6. JUNIC also discussed joint information activities for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), and considered the information strategy and programme of information activities for the 1997 special session of the General Assembly to review the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. Following the session, the implementation of the information programme for "Earth Summit + 5" was coordinated through the open-ended JUNIC working group, which dedicated several meetings in New York to this issue.

7. The twenty-third session of JUNIC is scheduled to take place at the International Labour Organization International Training Centre at Turin from 1 to 3 July 1997. While in the course of the session the Committee will take up a wide range of issues of mutual concern aimed at further strengthening inter-agency cooperation in the field of public information, its deliberations are expected to concentrate on the continuation of the discussion of ways and means of promoting better public understanding of the role and achievements of the United Nations that dominated the proceedings at the twenty-second session.